

THE 300th ANNIVERSARY

of the

Gravesend
Reformed Church

1655



1955

Gravesend Neck Road and East First St.,
Brooklyn, New York.

Ex Libris

SEYMOUR DURST

t' Fort nieuw Amsterdam op de Manhatans



FORT NEW AMSTERDAM



(NEW YORK), 1651.

*When you leave, please leave this book
Because it has been said
"Ever'thing comes t' him who waits
Except a loaned book."*

EVERY ARCHITECTURAL AND FINE ARTS LIBRARY

GIFT OF SEYMOUR B. DURST OLD YORK LIBRARY



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2014

THE 300th ANNIVERSARY

of the

Grauesend
Reformed Church

1655 - 1955

*"For I determined not to know
any thing among you, save Jesus
Christ, and Him crucified."*

I COR. 2:2

Minister

Rev. Kenneth Howard Kerr



Foreword—

Fifty years ago Pastor Van Buskirk preached a sermon on the history of our Church, going back then, two hundred and fifty years to its birth and carrying on to the date of his ministry. To this sermon we have added such facts as have been brought to light regarding the development of our Chapel work as well as bringing the history down to our present year. Miss Maude Voris acted as our historian and is to be commended for her work. We are grateful to our friend and former member of our Church, Mr. Stephen J. Voorhies, for the illustrations appearing in this book and for his interest and guidance. It is only that our Lord Jesus Christ may be honored that we publish this history of the Gravesend Reformed Church.

The 250th Anniversary Sermon —

(THE PASTOR) Before I begin this sermon I want to acknowledge my indebtedness to several authors from whom I have gathered the matter and more especially from the wisdom and the research of the Hon. William H. Stillwell, who was a townsman of yours in those earlier days of your history and life. And there are other historical works to which reference has been made, which I shall not be able to recount in the manuscript—but you will know what is mine and what is theirs. The words to which I will invite your attention, you will find recorded in the Fourth Chapter, according to St. Mark, and 28th verse, and in the last clause: "First, the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

The Church of God in the world is a growth and development. Instituted under the most adverse conditions, growing under the most pronounced opposition, coming to the zenith of its glory today, and destined to a supremacy, universal, that shall even put the glory of today in the shade beyond peradventure. It began with one man as a starting point; it shall never cease to be the greatest organization under the firmament, till all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues shall be embraced in that transcendent spectacle of uttering that great hallelujah chorus before the great white throne.

All churches sprang from feeble beginnings. No Church sprang full-fledged into being upon the footstool, ever. From the time that Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees to become the great head of the Church of God in the wilderness of Canaan, until today, the great sacramental hosts are numbered by the millions, under many names and in many climes, the Church of God in the world has been the most elaborate fulfilment that this world has ever seen, of our text this morning, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear."

The story of this Church's existence and life is the story of a

rise from small beginnings, but the two hundred and fifty years of her life which we celebrate today, is something to be proud of, and hence the gatherings that we contemplate in honor of this existence, cannot but stir the blood of every one of us and move us to thanksgiving to Almighty God for such a heritage and possession.

The beginning of this Church's existence is almost co-existent with the history of the existence of this town, and hence, a résumé of the circumstances and events that led up to the early settlement of this town of Gravesend may not be out of place just here.

Conceive, if you can, of a trackless waste, of uninhabited territory (except by the red man) with here and there a primitive dwelling of an occasional white settler, perhaps—with no school, no church, no friendly neighbors, even, to go to in time of need, except at wide distances. An agricultural folk, what there were of them; primitive in dress, limited in knowledge, limited in means—and you have a faint resemblance of the reality that existed here where we sit today, just prior to 1645, when Lady Deborah Moody first appeared upon the scene.

The Church of which you and I are proud today, if not born in her house, was born in close proximity to it, was "the Church in the wilderness" of which Megapolensis wrote ten years later, when he said, under date of March 18, 1655: "We have cause to be grateful to the Lords, Directors, and to your reverences, for the care and trouble taken to procure for the Dutch on Long Island a good clergyman, even though it has not yet resulted in anything. Meanwhile, God has led Dominie Johannes Polhemus from Brazil over the Caribbean Islands, to this place. He has for the present gone to Long Island to a village called 'Midwout,' which is somewhat the Meditullium of the other villages, to wit: Breuckelen, Amersfort and Gravesend." This was the beginning of this ancient Church, the first beginnings of the gospel of Christ in this region, the first appearance of the Church of God here, "in the blade." From that distant, far-off day till this moment, we have the Church "in the ear." And the great future spanning between today and the great day when the earth shall become flame and the elements melt with the fervent heat, is to constitute that great scene hinted at and prefigured by this description of Jesus Christ, "the full corn in the ear."

Gravesend was not a Dutch settlement, and this accounts for the uncertainty when this Church's organization in this community was effected. Without entering into the controversy as to the origin of

the name of the town, with Deborah Moody as a starting point, we have an English woman settling here to become the real beginning of this town's actual existence. Gravesend was English in name, English in its first settlers and its early government, and all the traditions handed down to us, helping us in the solution of this problem, point back to our earliest existence under the Crown, with Lady Deborah Moody as the moving spirit in its creation and administration. She came to this country from England, for religion's sake, as did many another adventurer who came to rugged New England and settled first in Salem, in Massachusetts, either early in 1640, or before it, for her name is found among the members of the Congregational Church, at Salem, in April, 1640. Here she lived, bought a farm, stocked it with cattle, and put it under cultivation. Becoming a convert to the views of Roger Williams, which had overspread New England, she began to give expression of her dissent from the views of the Congregational Church, concerning infant baptism, and three years after joining the Church of Salem, we find she was admonished by the Church, then excommunicated from the communion of the Church among whom she had cast her lot.

This visitation of the wrath of the Church of Salem upon her head paved the way for her coming to New Amsterdam to seek a more congenial home among the Dutch. Here we find her in 1643, where she met Nicholas Stillwell, a tobacco planter, who had recently been driven from his farm by the Indians, and had taken refuge within the fort, until the redskins had ceased their depredations. These English-speaking people, naturally enough, not feeling quite at home where only the Dutch was spoken, began to cast about for a new settlement where they could be in the full use of their religious liberty, which they so dearly loved, and still be safe from the attacks of the Indians. The Dutch Government gladly seconded this proposition, and invited them to select from the unappropriated lands of the West India Company, whose agents the Government was, and accordingly, we find a committee was appointed to select a site in what is now the Village of Gravesend—near the spot in which we are here convened. Gravesend was thus begun.

The first patent for land was issued for 100 morgen, or 200 acres, over against Conyene (Coney) Island. It bears date of August 1st, 1639, and was confirmed in 1643. The patent to Lady Moody from Governor Kieft is dated December 19th, 1645. It gives and grants to "Ye Honorable Lady Deborah Moody, Sir Henry Moody, Baronet,

Ensign George Baxter and Sergeant James Hubbard, and any that shall join in association with them, a tract bounded on the creek adjacent to Coneyne Island, with the power to erect a town and fortifications, and to have and enjoy the free liberty of conscience, according to the customs and manners of Holland, without molestation or disturbance from any magistrate or magistrates, or any other ecclesiastical minister that may pretend jurisdiction over them, and the liberty to constitute themselves a body politic, as freemen of the province and Town of Gravesend."

Armed with this document, Lady Moody made haste to proceed to her newly acquired possessions, and began the laying out of the town. Here she built a house for herself, not far from the spot in which we are now sitting, offered asylum to any who came unto her in the name of religion, was honored and beloved by all who knew her and passed away and was buried, by 1659, at least, and her dust lies in the old graveyard, not far away from this spot where we are worshipping today, awaiting the trumpet call of the Angel of the Resurrection.

All the earliest environments of Gravesend being distinctly English, Lady Deborah Moody herself being an Englishwoman, and being the one great rallying center unto which all the English-speaking people flocked and congregated as most congenial because of the mother tongue that was here spoken, it was only natural that some other religious creed should have obtained here, instead of the Dutch Reformed Church, which was the Church of Holland and not of England. Accordingly, the first religious sect that appeared in this locality, pervaded with religious impulses, whose history has come down to us, were Quakers, and the earliest Christian services held in this community were of that distinctive type and order, and Lady Moody, herself, though not in entire sympathy, perhaps, with all their tenets, adopted that form of religious belief, and fellowship, for want of a better one.

That the Quakers were not popular with the Colonial Governor, Peter Stuyvesant, is evident from the following incident: Robert Hodgson, who preached here in Gravesend in 1657, was arrested for holding service in this community, against the order of the Governor-General Stuyvesant, along with two women who had entertained him at their home. Stuyvesant at once ordered the prisoners sent to New Amsterdam, where he gave the women a piece of his mind in no uncertain language and then released them, but Hodgson was made to feel the wrath of the old Dutch Governor. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment at hard labor, or to pay a fine of six hundred

guilders. Such a fine was beyond his power to liquidate, and accordingly he was compelled to bear the other alternative. Chained to a wheelbarrow, he was ordered to work, but refused, and was thereupon lashed by a negro until he fainted. He remained in Prison for some months, was scourged repeatedly into insensibility, and was cruelly dealt with in many ways, until, from sheer pity on the part of the Governor's sister, at his awful condition, he was prevailed upon to release him under a new sentence of banishment from the province.

But all the inhabitants of Gravesend were not Quakers, for in 1655, two years before Robert Hodgson appeared in Gravesend, Reverend John Megapolensis, of New Amsterdam, under date of March 18th of that year, wrote to the Classis of Amsterdam, as follows: "God has led Dominie Johannes Polhemus from Brazil over the Caribbean Islands to this place. He has for the present gone to Long Island to a village called Midwout, which is somewhat the Meditullium of the other villages, to wit: Breuckelen, Amersfort and Gravesend. There he has preached for the accommodation of the inhabitants on Sundays during the winter season." That was in 1655, and under date of January 13th, 1657, in the petition of the magistrates of Amersfort, praying confirmation of an assessment for the minister's salary, said petition goes on to state that: "In order to raise the three hundred florins in the easiest way (needed to make up their quota of said amount) we have assessed the property of each person, conscientiously and to the best of our knowledge, here below given in detail, which, with what some parties from Gravesend have voluntarily offered to contribute, will make up a sum of three hundred florins."

From all of which it appears that a Dutch Dominie was rendering a Dutch service for the benefit of a Dutch contingent, somewhere even at this early date, or Gravesend would not have made a contribution for the support of a minister settled over at the Churches of Midwout and Amersfort. In 1660 a formal petition was drawn up and sent to the Director-General and Council of New Amsterdam by the inhabitants of Gravesend, asking for the appointment of a preacher or pastor to be sent here, that then the glory of God may be spread, the ignorant taught, the simple and innocent strengthened, and the licentious restrained. Then we shall be able to live in greater peace and in the fear of the Lord, under your Honor's wise administration and government. Whereupon relying we await your Honor's favorable reply, and so doing, etc. Signed by ten names, including the name of Lieutenant Nicholas Stillwell.

Nothing, however, came of the petition, and in 1664 the country passed into the hands of the English. Under a new regime, new laws were enacted and the governmental policy of England was substituted for that which prevailed under the Dutch Government, and the first building used for court purposes and afterwards used for Church services as well, was erected in Gravesend, and was known as the "Sessions House." This "Sessions House," or Court House, was erected at the expense of Kings County, with Newtown and Staten Island, and Gravesend had the honor bestowed upon it of becoming the County seat, virtually, of Kings County, from 1667 to 1685, when a law was passed removing the County seat to Flatbush. The location of the Sessions House was on a lot set apart for the purpose, on the southeast corner of the northwesterly village square, forty-eight feet east and west, and forty-three feet on the northerly and southerly sides or boundaries. The conditions and obligations contained in its erection were as follows: The town was to furnish the land on which the building was to be built, free of cost; it covenanted to keep the building in repair for twenty-one years, barring casualties, and they were to have the use of the building for Church or town purposes, as occasion might require. This building was completed in 1667, and thus became the first Church edifice in which religious services were held in the town of Gravesend.

Dominie Polhemus had been the pastor at Flatbush and Flatlands now since 1655, and continued to remain so until 1676. Whether he ever officiated in the Sessions House, at Gravesend, we do not know, but we do know that Gravesend journeyed to Brooklyn, occasionally, perhaps to Flatbush and Flatlands as well, to hear the Word of God in those days, for Dominie Hendrick Selyns says: "We do not preach in a Church, but in a barn." (Korenscheur.) Next winter, we shall by God's favor, and the general assistance of the people, erect a Church. The audience is passably large, coming from Midwout, New Amersfort, and often Gravesend, increases it.

In 1685, the Sessions House was removed from Gravesend to Flatbush, and the old Sessions House, and the lot on which it had stood in Gravesend, was afterwards sold to a number of the residents of the town, as subsequent deeds of individuals' rights in the meeting house and grounds show. The interval spanned between the years 1685 and 1705 seems involved in obscurity in the history of the Church. No records have come down to us which are authoritative and reliable, of a distinct and separate organization, as yet. We grope our way in the dark, in search of any separate ecclesiastical exercise, till a few

years later. Suffice it to say that probably the services of Dominies Selyns, Van Zuren, Varick and Lupardus, as occasional supplies who came over from Flatbush and Flatlands, as occasion permitted, filled in the time from 1685 to 1705, when Dominie Bernadus Freeman enters upon the scene.

With the death of Wilhelmus Lupardus in 1701, all the Churches in Kings County were left without a pastor. In 1705 some of the Consistories of the Churches of Kings County wanted to call Reverend Bernardus Freeman to the pastorate of the Churches, and there were other Consistories who wished to call Reverend Vincentius Antonides to the same position at the same time. Freeman allowed himself to become the tool of Governor Cornbury, was induced to accept a civil license at his hand, December 26th, 1705 to officiate in the Churches on Long Island and moved down from Schenectady to become the pastor of these Churches, after he had already declined a call from them. The rest of the Churches, on the other hand, had, through the Classis, secured the services of Vincentius Antonides, from Holland. Both of these ministers accepted, and as each party claimed to represent all the Churches of the County, an acrimonious dispute sprang up, and became so intense that it threatened the very life of the Dutch Churches on Long Island. At length, the bitterness of this ecclesiastical controversy died away, and the parties to the dispute became reconciled to each other, and a kind of peace was patched up, which resulted, happily for the Churches, in an agreement in 1714, on December 27th of that year, between the six associate or Collegiate Churches of Brooklyn, Flatbush, Flatlands, New Utrecht, Bushwick and Jamaica, by which the joint services of both Dominies Freeman and Antonides were secured.

By this cessation of hostilities and the signing of articles of capitulation in the adoption of this agreement between the six Collegiate Churches, Gravesend was to be benefited, as we shall see. In the controversy between Freeman and Antonides, New Utrecht had espoused the side of Bernardus Freeman, and Gravesend seems to have sided with her in that contention, having made some arrangement with that town for some part of the ministerial services of Mr. Freeman, and for which they paid a part of his salary, receipts for which, Dominie Labagh declared, he had seen in unbroken succession from May 13th, 1706 to December 25th, 1714. Evidence number one that Gravesend was then at that time an organization. Then the agreement entered into on January 4th, 1715, between John Lake and John Simonson on the one side and Cornelius Van Brunt and Peter Cortelyou on the other,

signing a compact between the Town of New Utrecht and the Town of Gravesend, for the third part of all the ministerial services of Reverends Freeman and Antonides, puts the organization of this ancient Church at that time as a fact beyond a peradventure.

The specifications contained in this agreement were as follows, as recorded in the Kings County Register's Office, and translated from the Dutch: "First, that Gravesend shall have the full third part of the whole of the religious services of the Reverends Freeman and Antonides, which New Utrecht has obtained by agreement between the six associated towns—that is, when New Utrecht has had two turns, then Gravesend shall have a third in that town; and when the Lord's supper is twice administered in New Utrecht, the third time it shall be administered in Gravesend; and so on for all time in this manner. Second, Gravesend promises to pay a full third part of the salary which New Utrecht had agreed to pay, every half year, according to the agreement of the six associated towns, beginning with New Years, 1715, and so on yearly, during the whole of the time of the service of said ministers. Further, Gravesend promises to fetch one-third of the firewood required for their use and which New Utrecht has agreed to fetch, at such times and manner as shall fall to her share. Also to bear the one-third part of New Utrecht's proportion of the cost of repairs to the ministerial residence."

This article of agreement, signed, sealed and delivered and recorded in the Register's Office of the County, over the signature of these chosen representatives, together with an official list of Elders and Church members, reaching back to 1714, sweeps away every vestige of doubt as to this Church's organization being clearly established and having the ordinances regularly administered during the pastorate of Bernardus Freeman, reaching from 1705 to 1741, when he was declared emeritus and retired from the service of the ministry.

On the retirement of Mr. Freeman he was succeeded by Reverend Johannes Arondeus, who came from Holland in 1742, and preached in Kings County until 1747. The Reverend Vincentius Antonides died that same year, 1742, and he was succeeded by Reverend Ulpianus Van Sinderin. The two ministers did not agree very well together. Arondeus was of a contumacious spirit, had frequent quarrels with his colleagues. He was charged with drunkenness and other crimes, and finally, in 1750, was suspended from the ministry by the Coetus, but he paid no attention to it. How long Arondeus officiated at Gravesend is not known, but it could not have been long, for in 1745 the Church was ministered unto by Ber-

nadus Ver Bryck, as appears from an entry in the baptismal registry between the dates 1720 and 1745. In 1745, the historian says, the Reverend Arondeus, Pastor of the Churches of Flatbush and Flatlands, and of the Church of Gravesend, withdrew from the arrangement made with New Utrecht, in 1714-15, and without any known cause, cut off the Church and congregation from all religious service whatsoever. There have been many short cuts into the ministry, and not a few of them questionable and of doubtful propriety in the methods and means pursued for attaining unto that end. The sudden termination of the contract made between the Churches of New Utrecht and Gravesend in 1714-15, on the part of Arondeus, left the Church at a loss to know what to do in the premises, and the first step they took in the way of filling up their lack of a minister for their pulpit, was in securing the services of Bernadus Ver Bryck, a schoolmaster, to conduct services for them as a pulpit supply in the interim.

Ver Bryck began the study of Theology with Arondeus when he was Pastor of the Churches of Kings County, without the permission or sanction of either Classis or Synod. He ordained him, and the people of the Town of Gravesend, considering that laying on of hands on the part of Arondeus valid, they engaged him as their Pastor. Ver Bryck preached in Gravesend and baptized children here, as is evident from the old Church records, but removed to North Branch, N. J., in 1749, and thus his connection with this Church ceased. Then followed a period of ten or twelve years, fraught with anxiety and concern, second to none in the checkered career of this ecclesiastical organization. The sky had been dark before but now it assumed an inky blackness. The dissension between Freeman and Antonides augured ill for this weak creation just launched upon its career of preaching Christianity to the people of that early day. Then when Arondeus summarily snapped asunder the bands of the contract between Gravesend and New Utrecht, made in 1715, by refusing to render any further service to this Church without giving any reason for his course pursued, that was a sad blow to the cause of religion in this community. And now when scarcely yet recovered from the shock of these two previous attacks upon her prestige and Church life, the removal of Ver Bryck away from the community, and its train of providential circumstances, which could, perhaps, have been neither foreseen nor averted, struck at the very life of this Zion, still wearing only her swaddling clothes, threatening her almost with extinction.

The retirement of Ver Bryck leaving this pulpit vacant, and the decimated ranks of the rank and file of this young sacramental host, by death

and other causes, those that were left in it becoming disheartened and ready to give up in despair, jeopardized the very existence of the Church to a degree that made its continuance almost questionable.

The old Sessions House, which had stood since it was built, in 1667, had become dilapidated beyond repair, through age; it was so old that it had to be taken down. The congregation had been weakened so much by death and other causes, that there were not sufficient male members left to fill the offices of Elders and Deacons. Then add to this list, the distractions that were rending the Church at large, on account of the controversy that existed between the Coetus and Conferentia parties (whether ordinations could and should be performed in this country, irrespective of the authority and consent of the old Classis of Amsterdam, which was then sweeping over the Churches). And, in addition to all this, remember the moral effect upon the community at large, of the dissolute and immoral life of Arondeus, who had been charged with drunkenness and other crimes, and suspended from the ministry.

With all this array of discouragements confronting them, we need not be surprised that they had to close the Church, because they could go on no longer.

This was the state of things in this Town and Community from the time that Ver Bryck left, in 1749-50, until 1762, ten or twelve years later, when Reverend Martinus Schoonmaker became a potent factor in the Church's life. In that year this godly and earnest young man visited Gravesend and by hard, personal work and earnest appeals aroused this Gravesend constituency from its lethargy and discouragements. He was a young man full of fire and earnestness. He sought the help and advice of old Dominie Van Sinderin, then living in an adjoining congregation, in his proposed task; and he was greatly helped by him in formulating his plans to be pursued.

In 1760 the old Sessions House was torn down, and in 1762 the people, under the inspiration of young Schoonmaker, and the help of Good Dominie Van Sinderin, were reorganized into the Church of our Reformed order, with twelve male and nine female members, or a total of twenty-one. They immediately took steps toward building a new Church edifice, and this first building, constructed distinctively for Church purposes, and the second, that had been used for the purposes of worship, was built upon the identical spot where the old Sessions House had stood.

No cut or picture of this old tabernacle has been able to be found, but the description of it has descended from father to son, and there is no lack of evidence that we have an authoritative and accurate represen-

tation of this ancient Church, preserved unto posterity beyond a peradventure. It stood facing the south, as the old Sessions House had done before it. It was slightly smaller than its predecessor, built in 1667, and was of the style of architecture current for Church buildings in that day. That is to say: It was a low building with a double pitched roof, and having double doors of entrance. It was painted brown, inside and out, with four windows of small panes, of upper and lower sash, on either side. One aisle in the center of the building ran the entire length, in which were two strong pillars, each about fifteen feet from the end, supporting the roof. A gallery for young men ran across the south end, and under this were the quarters reserved for the colored people of the Church. The pulpit, at the north end, was a plain octagon coop, reached by a spiral stairs, and perched upon a pole. The sides of the edifice were shingled, and the inside sealed with boards. The building was surmounted by a spire containing a belfry, and a bell, weighing perhaps eighty pounds, to summon the worshippers on Sabbath morning. And above all stood the orthodox weathercock, so common in the Fatherland, of approved Dutch make and finish. There were no heating appliances, except the current foot-stove, which the housewife brought along with her from her home, and filled with live coals from a neighbor's house in close proximity to the place of worship. As to the minister, it was no uncommon thing for him to go into the country tavern nearest at hand, and take a dram of standard make and purity, along with his parishioners, before going into the pulpit, to keep out the cold and limber up his tongue for the long Dutch sermon which was to follow.

This Church building, unpretentious in appearance and primitive in the extreme, was built from moneys realized from the sale of pews, with the understanding that no tax or assessment should ever be imposed upon the owners, a promise that was faithfully and sacredly kept. Completed in 1762, this Church edifice, the first that was erected exclusively for religious purposes, was dedicated to the service of God and opened for divine worship on July 25th, 1762, by Dominie Schoonmaker. This must have been while he was yet a student of Theology, for he was not licensed to preach until 1765, and then was a young man only twenty-eight years old.

Soon after this, Schoonmaker became the Pastor of the Churches of Harlem and Gravesend, taking up his residence in Harlem and journeying to Gravesend on horseback, as occasion demanded, receiving for his services rendered here thirty-five pounds sterling (one hundred and seventy-five dollars) per year, and preaching at frequent intervals. On Au-



The Old Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Gravesend

gust 10th, 1768, Reverend Martinus Schoonmaker bought a farm in Harlem, consisting of twenty-eight acres, on which he resided, and where he made his home. Preaching at Gravesend on alternate Sundays, it was his custom to journey to this place on Saturday afternoons, and put up at the house of some parishioner, where he had been invited to stay over Sunday, and on Monday morning return home unless some necessary engagement compelled him to remain over for a longer time.

The hardships attending this pastorate under such untoward conditions can be more easily imagined than described. An earnest patriot, the unsettled state of the country left him a suspect in the eyes of the British more than once. Plots to capture him were frustrated more than once only by the alertness and loyalty of his friends. His journeys to Harlem were fraught with dangers on repeated occasions, but still he followed the leadings of Providence and braved the storms which threatened him, and became the one pioneer of the Church in Gravesend in this wilderness of hardships and distress, whose name is a sweet benediction yet today, and whose work shall not be soon forgotten. Gravesend never had so much for so little as she had in the life-blood of Martinus Schoonmaker, poured out upon the altar in the heroic effort to stir up her people to a more pronounced religious life, and in preaching the Gospel of Christ under such forbidding conditions, for that mere pittance of thirty-five pounds sterling, or a hundred and seventy-five dollars per year. Schoonmaker, faithful to the trust that God had committed to his hands, patient and unfaltering in this first charge of his early choice, was paving the way to a more honorable and a more lucrative position that was awaiting him though he knew it not.

While he was ministering here, Reverend John Casper Rubel had succeeded Arondeus as a colleague of Reverend Van Sinderin in the other Reformed Churches of Kings County. Dominie Van Sinderin, by reason of the infirmities of age, resigned in 1784 and his colleague, Rubel, was deposed from the ministry on account of drunkenness and ill treatment of his wife in May of that same year. Consequently, the Churches of Brooklyn, Flatbush, New Utrecht, Bushwick and Flatlands were again left without a Pastor. On the fifth day of October, 1784, the united Churches of Kings County issued a call to Reverend Mr. Schoonmaker, which, after some delay, he accepted (offering him one hundred and fifty pounds sterling—seven hundred and fifty dollars—salary per year), on the condition and with the understanding that Gravesend be associated with the other Churches and still remain under his pastoral care, he being unwilling to sever his connection with that Church. This proposition was cheer-

fully agreed to, and Dominie Schoonmaker immediately took steps towards removing from Harlem to Flatbush.

In 1785, therefore, the collegiate relation between Harlem and Gravesend was dissolved by mutual consent; the Reverend Martinus Schoonmaker resigned his charge and sold his farm in Harlem in order to become the Pastor of the Collegiate Churches of Kings County and to this collegiate arrangement Gravesend became a party, having services held there every six weeks.

On October 28th, 1787, Reverend Peter Lowe, a licentiate, was called and became the colleague of Dominie Schoonmaker. He was ordained in the Church at New Utrecht on Sunday morning and installed next day in the Church at Flatbush. He continued Associate Pastor of these Churches with Dominie Schoonmaker until 1808, when he took more immediate charge of the Churches of Flatbush and Flatlands, while Dominie Schoonmaker confined his ministrations to the others until the next year, 1809, when Dominie Beattie became Pastor of New Utrecht, and in 1811 John Bassett became Pastor of Bushwick and Gravesend.

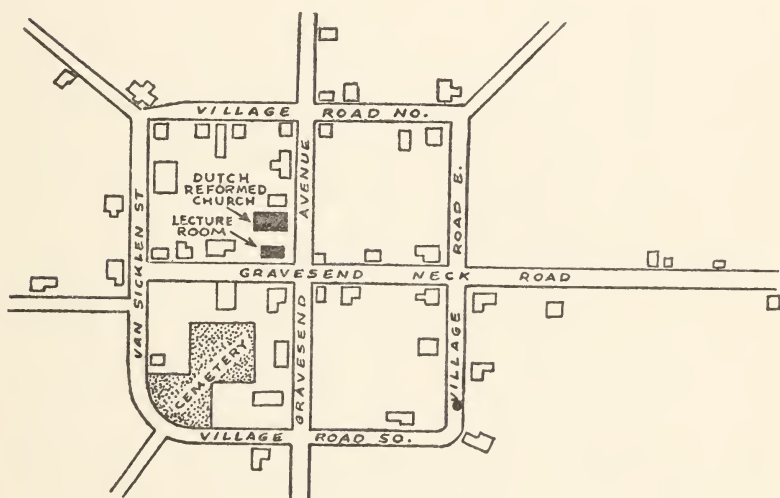
After this date Schoonmaker exercised a general superintendence over the Churches of Kings County, preaching on alternate Sundays at Bushwick, on which occasion Bassett preached at Gravesend, in which Church, under this arrangement, there was preaching every alternate Sunday. In this way the Church at Gravesend was ministered unto, until a too great addiction to intoxicants caused his suspension from the ministry in 1824, soon after which he died. With the suspension and death of Dominie Bassett, and the departure from his earthly toils to the rest prepared for the people of God, of Dominie Schoonmaker, at eighty years of age, both of which events occurred in the year 1824, this Church was again left without a pastor and had to depend upon supplies.

For eight years following the death of this lamented and beloved servant of God (Dominie Schoonmaker), the Church shared in the services of such men as it could obtain from time to time, not the least remarkable among whom was Dominie John Hendricks, a man of quaint and original speech, transparent guilelessness, kindly and genial spirit, and whose amusing views of men and things have made his name a household word and printed him in indelible characters upon the pages of memory of those who knew him. Add to this discouraging feature in this Church's history the other fact that the old Church building, erected in 1762, was becoming old and dilapidated and almost untenable through age, and you have the untoward conditions that confronted this people when in 1832 Reverend Isaac P. Labagh was invited to this field to be-

come the Church's Pastor. He was installed on November 7th of that year, and was the first minister who gave his whole time to this charge alone, and was called by the Consistory at an annual compensation of five hundred dollars.

Among the first things this newly-acquired man of God sought to do was to revise the roll of membership of this ancient Zion, and collect together the scantily-kept records of business proceedings and Consistorial action. And, having succeeded in this, he next turned his attention to the erection of a new house of worship, to take the place of the old one.

On the thirtieth day of November, 1832, a meeting of Consistory was called and a committee appointed, consisting of Garret Stryker, Nicholas S. Williamson and Samuel I. Garretson, to take up the matter of the building of a new Church, its estimated cost, the site on which it was to be erected, and so forth; who, after investigation, reported in favor of purchasing additional ground adjoining the old site, on the north and west sides thereof. This the Committee were authorized to do, and were also empowered to erect a new church edifice on the enlarged site. And accordingly they purchased from Cornelius I. Emmons and Maria, his wife,



Gravesend Village Square, from a map of 1873, showing location of the Old Church, Lecture Room, and homes of residents.

for two hundred and fifty dollars, a tract of land sixty-five feet by one hundred and forty-six feet by one hundred and thirteen feet by one hundred and four feet; thence westerly along the old Church lot, forty-three feet; then southerly forty-eight feet, to the place of beginning. The title to the above was vested in the Elders and Deacons of the Reformed Dutch Church and Congregation of Gravesend, to have and to hold as joint tenants, and not as tenants in common, subject, nevertheless, and in trust for the sole use and benefit of the Reformed Dutch Church and Congregation of the Town of Gravesend, in the County of Kings aforesaid. Upon this site just acquired and duly recorded, this Committee proceeded at once to erect a new structure. They had three thousand eight hundred and thirty-three dollars in hand for this purpose, and on February 5th, 1833, set forward in real earnest to construct an edifice to meet their needs—forty-five feet front and sixty-two feet deep, to be built with day work, and with Hendrick Van Dyck as boss carpenter. The master carpenter in charge fixed the scale of prices to be paid to the workmen, and all the carpenters in the town who desired, it was agreed, should be employed thereon.

This building was completed and dedicated to the service of God on January 5th, 1834, with new pews in the new auditorium, and the old pews from the old Church placed in the basement, which was fitted up for a Sunday School room.

The Reverend Isaac P. Labagh continued his ministrations to this people until 1842, when, on account of erroneous views which he had entertained through association with two new found friends who were Hebrews, living at Unionville, he was summoned to appear before Classis to answer for his change of views concerning the observance of the Sabbath, and refusing to obey the summons, he was suspended from the ministry and the pulpit again became vacant.

Early in the next year, January 22nd, 1843, the Consistory extended a call to the Reverend Abraham I. Labagh (a cousin of the former pastor) to become the Pastor of this Church, and he accepted. Up to this time no provision had been made for a parsonage, for the former Pastor had lived in his own house. In the advent of Reverend Abraham I. Labagh as the newly-chosen Pastor of this field, the Consistory rented a farm house of John I. Stillwell, in Gravesend Neck, the extreme easterly part of the congregation, as a parsonage, and the Reverend Mr. Labagh moved into it until a desirable site could be secured and a house erected thereon.

The new incumbent having just returned from the charge of the Reformed Church at St. Thomas, in the West Indies, and being ill-prepared

to stand the rigors of the northern winters, was compelled to seek a more genial climate until he became accustomed to the change, and the Reverend R. D. Van Kleeck, Principal of Erasmus Hall, in Flatbush, from 1843-1860, officiated here in his absence and in his stead.

A parsonage which had long been a necessity now began to attract the attention of the congregation. On September 21st, 1844, a committee was appointed by the Consistory to choose a site and proceed with the erection of a suitable building thereon. The land was bought of John I. Lake and Ann, his wife, and the building was erected by the carpenters, Lawrence and Jacobus Ryder—plain, unpretentious, but commodious and comfortable, and still stands a monument to the memories of those dear men who constructed it.

In due time Reverend Mr. Labagh moved into it, and made it beautiful within, by the sweetness of the lives of himself and his esteemed wife, and without, by all that the hands of the horticulturist could put upon it. The severity of the long and trying winters, however, lost none of their dreaded features by the passage of years, and it began to tell upon the health of both the good Dominie and his wife, and giving up in despair of becoming acclimated to the northern latitude, in 1859 he resigned. In the same year the Consistory invited Reverend Maurice G. Hansen to the pastorate of this Church, and he accepted.

A young man fresh from the Seminary at New Brunswick, at which he had just graduated in May of that year, full of fiery earnestness, clear-headed and of deep and earnest piety, he won his way to the hearts of the people, and this pulpit gave no uncertain sound during the whole period of his incumbency. He was a man of the old school type, natural to him from his Holland ancestry. He was brought up on the Heidelberg Catechism; he believed every word of that Calvinistic expression of faith, and his catechetical classes and instructions have not yet been lost upon the community. A hard student and profound thinker, a great reader and a writer who has left literature enough behind him to insure his name being preserved and honored by posterity for many years yet to come.

Mr. Hansen continued in this pastorate until 1871, when he resigned, and shortly afterward accepted a call to Coxsackie, New York, where he did good service for many years, and only relinquished the work of successful pastorates at Grace Chapel at Flatbush, and Hegeman's Mills, New York, the work to which he had consecrated his life, when failing health and declining years summoned him to stop. The last recorded acts of these twelve years of faithful ministry are still extant in the fair handwriting of their chief actor. His last baptism of record was: "Richard Davis, the

child of Dr. R. L. Van Kleek and Ellen S. Lawrence, his wife, on October 21st, 1871." His latest marriage ceremony was that of Cornelius S. Stryker and Elizabeth Lake, on June 13th, 1871. And his last right hand of fellowship extended to welcome new members into the Church was that which welcomed Ellen Jane Cornell (Mrs. John S. Ryder) and Richard Henry Van Cleef into full communion, June 2nd, 1871. (Servant of God, well done. Rest from thy loved employ. The battle fought, the victory won; enter thy Master's joy.)

Mr. Hansen was succeeded on January 1st, 1872, by Reverend Austin P. Stockwell, a graduate of Amherst College and of Union Theological Seminary, with successful pastorates at Pleasant Plains and Millbrook, Dutchess County, New York, from which he came here, where he left many warm friends behind him. His biographer says he was, in an eminent degree, the friend of the poor and the lowly, the downcast and careworn. Modest and unassuming in his deportment, pleasing within the pulpit and out of it, refined, hard-working and painstaking, probably no pastor since Dominie Schoonmaker enjoyed and deserved the full support and confidence of the community greater than he. His pulpit preparation was careful and thorough, his sermons plain, practical and convincing, eminently evangelical, theologically sound from center to circumference, and delivered always with a seriousness of manner that left no doubt in the minds of his hearers that he was the accredited ambassador of the great King. He was a four-square man, standing upon a four-square platform with a four-square message to deliver, and he delivered it without fear.

It was his privilege and joy to receive many of you who are here present this morning into the full communion of this Church, and has preceded you only a little and is waiting your coming today into the great spiritual communion of the Church Triumphant on high. For fifteen years he went in and out among you, sometimes satisfied and sometimes not so well satisfied with the gathered results of his work, and in the fall of 1886, having received an invitation to become a missionary in connection with the Children's Aid Society of the City of New York, he resigned this charge to take up that work that seemed to him a call from God for his services.

That feeling of dissatisfaction with results which comes sooner or later to every conscientious and consecrated Christian minister and servant of God moved him to write thus feelingly and tenderly to his Consistory: "I have been the pastor of this Church for the past fifteen years, a very much longer pastorate than the average, even in our staid Re-

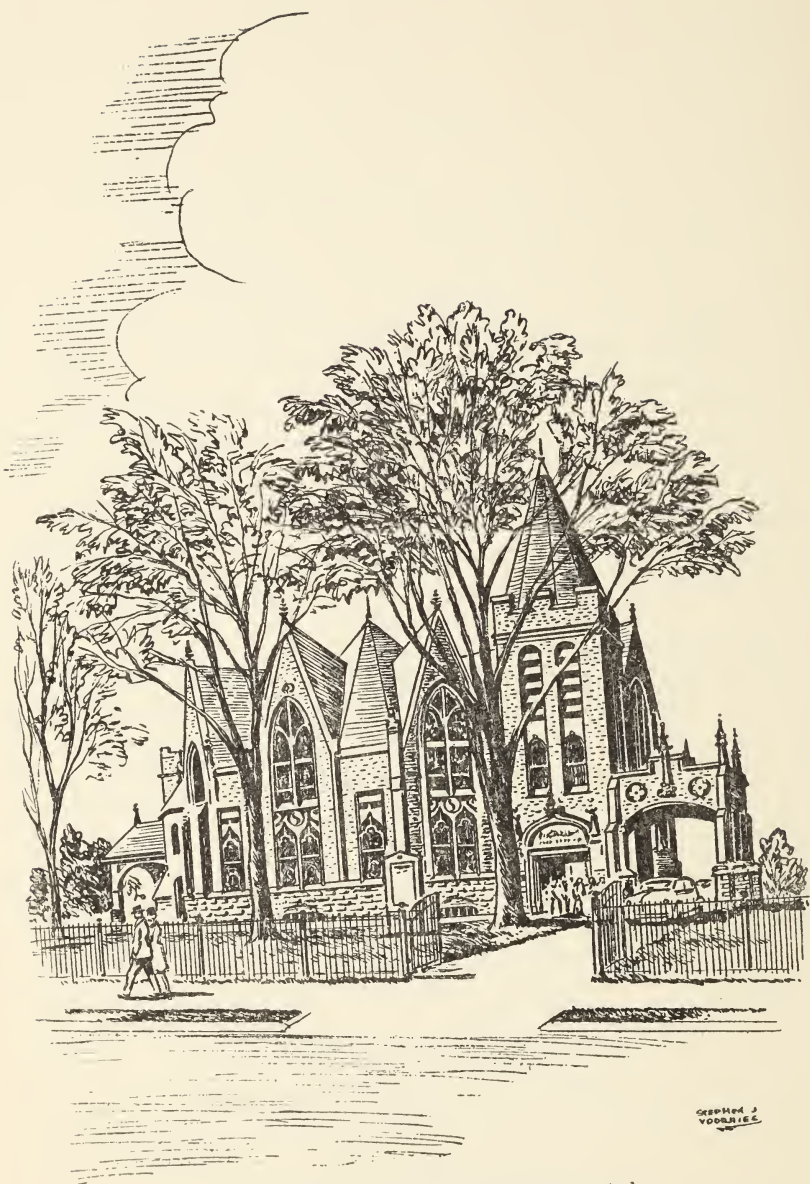
formed Church. During this time we have had many seasons of refreshing and many, we believe, have been hopefully converted. But the feeling has been growing upon me for the past year that, so far as the present generation of those unconverted is concerned, my work among them is done. If a pastorate of fifteen years has failed to bring them to Christ, I could hardly expect one of fifty to do it."

With this tinge of a feeling of discouragement, not unlike that of Elijah when he lay under the juniper tree, oppressing him, this Consistory reluctantly listened to his prayer and united with him in an application to the Classis for a dissolution of the pastoral relation.

Concerning the present incumbency and this present pastorate, so fresh in your minds, so well known in your lives, and so utterly unworthy of comparison with the work of those great Boanerges who have all passed away, I may be pardoned if I leave myself out of consideration altogether this morning in this last chapter and last leaf of the chapter concerning the history of this Church's life. If I could close this historical discourse without a single personal allusion to myself I would do it. I have not done much. I have done very little, but what I have done I have done conscientiously and to the best of my ability, according to the light that God has given me. But I do not want any praise for what I have done. If it is worthy of remembrance, I will have it when we have all reached the great white throne.

With this one word, if you will suffer it, I wish you would drop the present incumbent in this pulpit out of sight, for propriety forbids any further reference to myself. I came to you on January 23rd, 1887, with the great invitation of the Revelation: "Come, the spirit and the bride," etc., and I have not ceased to make that the high ideal of presentation in my preaching, as I hope to make it still, by the grace of God, until my ministry in this pulpit shall cease.

The Church building which had been the scene of most of the ministry of Reverend Isaac P. Labagh, and the entire ministries of the three succeeding pastors, the congregation began to feel, stood in need of removal from its present site, before my advent among you, on account of the rapidly increasing traffic on Sundays on the railroad that ran immediately in front of the property, and because of the noise of the frequent trains with their menace to life and limb, that threatened a large portion of the congregation every Sabbath. And in 1892, in the Providence of God, a way was opened for the congregation to change its location for the better, and it gladly availed itself of it. The lot on which the Church stood had become valuable for commercial purposes by the passage of years, and in



The Gravesend Reformed Church of Today

the fall of the year 1892 the Town Board of the Town of Gravesend purchased the property for public purposes for fifteen thousand dollars.

The contract of sale was signed on December 22nd, and on January 16th, 1893, the deed was given to the principals in the transaction, we covenanting to give possession to the property on June 16th, 1893, and have all the buildings removed from the premises by that date.

The new site for the new Church was purchased of Mr. J. M. Stillwell, as soon as possible after the sale had been effected, and consisted of three and a half acres on the Neck Road, east of the old location, for which the congregation paid six thousand dollars, and immediately took steps in the direction of rearing a new structure. Bids for the new Church were invited and secured, and the contract for the building was awarded to Messrs. Peter Van Note for the carpenter work, and Mr. Benville Schweimler for the mason work, at a cost of twenty-two thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars—the building to be of washed brick with terra-cotta trimmings. The bids for the new structure were opened on August 4th, 1893, and ground was broken on August 9th, 1893, the Pastor taking out the first shovel of earth at eight o'clock in the morning.

The cornerstone was laid October 8th, 1893, with addresses by Doctors Wells, Brush and Rev. J. S. Gardner, and the completion of the Edifice and its dedication for divine worship took place on October 28th, 1894, Reverend Dr. Farrar of the Seventh Avenue Church, Brooklyn, preaching the sermon.

The first service held in the new Church was that of the Executive Committee of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, when it was yet in its unfinished state—June 8th, 1894.

The pews for the new edifice were the gift of the Christian Endeavor Society, and the carpets for the same were the bestowment of the Ladies' Aid Society of the Church and Congregation.

Thus fully equipped and handsomely completed, this Church came into the possession of the congregation, a model of excellence and beauty that owes a debt of gratitude today to that able and far-sighted and devoted consistory who assumed this great task and carried it on to completion without a jar or a misunderstanding, from foundation to finish.

In the early winter of 1900 the perilous enterprise of selling the old parsonage and erecting a new one on the newly-acquired land on which the new Church stood, began to assume a tangible form in this community. It had long been felt that the distance that spanned between the parsonage and the Church was something that might and ought to be remedied; and a desire to concentrate the Church properties began to appeal

to the wisdom of the friends of the Church. And on December 29th, 1900, the agreement was signed and the first payment made on the sale of this piece of real estate which had been in the possession of the Church since 1844, for the lump sum of nine thousand dollars. An order from the Court authorizing the sale was obtained in due time, and four thousand dollars was applied to wiping out the balance of a mortgage of twelve thousand dollars which had been put upon the new Church; and five thousand dollars was left at the disposal of the Consistory to be reinvested and applied in a new parsonage adjoining the Church. On May 13th, 1901, bids for the new parsonage were opened, and the contract awarded to Bennett and Ryder, two young men in this old Church organization, for the sum of four thousand five hundred and fifty dollars, the building to be completed by August 25th, 1901, under penalty of ten dollars per day for every day that passed beyond that date, in case of failure.

The contract was faithfully carried out, and in due time the house was completed and the present incumbent had the high honor accorded him of becoming the first occupant of the handsome property.

Nineteen hundred and five, the anniversary of the two hundred and fifty years of existence of this ancient Church, finds it in the possession of a handsome Church edifice and a comfortable, up-to-date parsonage, and the whole property unencumbered and free of debt and with money in the treasury. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us but unto Thy name be the glory. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head over all."

Today I conclude the eighteenth year of this pastorate. I thank you all for the help and the prayers you have extended to me in this pastoral relation, and for your financial aid in all the events when your help was needed and solicited.

For the peace that was perched upon our banners in those trying days when building a new sanctuary confronted us I will not be forgetful this morning.

For the unanimity of sentiment that continued throughout that day that made that work lighter and pleasanter, I will not forget to give thanks this morning. The master builders in that magnificent enterprise have some of them passed away, but some of them remain until this day. I want to lay this small tribute of thanksgiving upon the graves of those departed this morning for those noble lives, for their prayers and their

labors and sacrifices so invaluable to this congregation. And to those who had the honor accorded them of planting this Church of God in such lovely situation, my prayer is that they may all live long and happily under these temple walls, until the great angel of the Resurrection shall throw open the great gates of the City of Gold, and of God, to their occupation, forever and ever.

The Fifty Years Following —

At the morning service of THE REFORMED (DUTCH) CHURCH of GRAVESEND March 19, 1905, the Pastor, Rev. Peter V. Van Buskirk, ably and masterfully gave "The 250th Anniversary Sermon"—the history of the Church established at Gravesend from its inception March 18, 1655, to March 18, 1905.

This sermon we have repeated especially for those of you who were not with us in 1905 so that you, too, may have the background and story of the Church's past existence and growth through the 250 years. If you should have access to a copy of this earlier issue, be sure to read the companion address given by Mr. Henry Whittemore at the evening service of that day, "Gravesend, the City of Refuge for the oppressed and persecuted of God's People," wherein the Quaker and English background is given.

During the afternoon of March 21, 1905, Mr. Donald Sage Mackey of the Collegiate Church, New York City, told of the "Old Church in Manhattan in 1628" and Dr. F. S. Schenck was the representative from "The Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America" situated at New Brunswick, N. J. There are a couple of shorter addresses in the same publication which will add a few more facts to our enlightenment and the history of our Gravesend Church.

There was a small group of Methodist people within the limits of the town of Gravesend who wanted a church building of their own but as their finances were limited were unable to build a sanctuary. The Lecture Room had been moved to our present location and had been used for the services of the Reformed Church while the new building was being erected and furnished. Now that there was no further need of this building and it was still usable, the Consistory of the Reformed Church sold it to the Methodist group for the sum of \$1.00. Again it was lifted on house-

moving apparatus and was taken for another ride through Neck Road past its former site one block and there was placed on a foundation already prepared for it on the south side of Neck Road within a few feet of Van Siclen Street. Here it had a number of years of further service.

That Thanksgiving Day, 1905, Mr. Van Buskirk invited the Methodist congregation to join with us for the Thanksgiving Day service, also inviting Rev. Bronson to preach the Thanksgiving Sermon. The following year the Dutch Reformed group were the invited guests of the Methodist group. It was a most pleasing comradeship.

Near the northern boundary of the old Town of Gravesend there lived a group of German people of the Protestant faith. Some of the parents would occasionally walk to the Gravesend Church for services and some of the older children came to the Sunday School. The little ones were unable to walk the distance.

Miss Cornelia Lake, one of the members of the Gravesend Reformed Church, who lived within the northern limits of the town, distributed tracts and Sunday School papers to these people. Dr. DuBois, a dentist, living in the vicinity, was also interested in starting a Sunday School for the children. Finally they found quarters for the group and Dr. DuBois became the Sunday School Superintendent. Soon they outgrew their Woodlawn Chapel.

At a meeting of the Consistory in December, 1905, a motion was "made and carried that the matter of constituting a Church at Woodlawn be referred to the Church Extension Committee of the South Classis of Long Island and request that they report whether such a place is practical or not." The answer must have been in the affirmative, for shortly afterwards the records show that Rev. Peter V. Van Buskirk was elected a "Committee of one to wait on Mrs. Thomas Ferguson with regard to the Woodlawn Property." Lawyer Charles Kenmore, a member of the Consistory, was commissioned to execute deed for "the Woodlawn Property."

Since the edifice was completed on the property on East 9th Street and Ave. M, the Woodlawn people requested the right, title and interest be turned over to them. The transfer was made in December, 1906. This was a free and voluntary gift from and on the part of the Reformed Protestant Church of Gravesend to the Woodlawn Church with \$1,000.00 left to the Woodlawn Church by Mrs. Cornelius Stryker.

All matters connected therewith transferred by the parent Church at Gravesend added another Church to the Classis of South Long Island. The Woodlawn Church thus became a separate institution with Rev. John Addy as minister.

Rev. Peter Van Buskirk died March 9, 1912, after giving twenty-five years of loyal service to the people of the Church and Chapel.

Rev. William Walton Clark of Brooklyn took over the charge of services and the needs of the congregation on September 29, 1912, without the use of the parsonage. On December 9, 1912, a call was extended to Rev. Philip H. Clifford and was accepted. He remained as pastor of the Church until October 29, 1917, when he resigned to accept a call to the First Reformed Church of Ridgewood, New Jersey.

Rev. Clifford instituted the Bible and Missionary Conference which we have continued as an annual event held each October. At this conference representatives of the Foreign and Domestic Boards report to us on the progress of our denominational mission projects in our own country and in foreign fields. The collection taken on this occasion is used toward the salary of the Missionary whom we have been assigned by the Board of Foreign Missions and for other good causes of Christian Service.

While Dr. Louis Dame was in Arabia we contributed \$900.00 yearly toward his salary. After many years of active service in the Near East he resigned and returned to the United States. Our support was then transferred to Dr. Lewis Scudder, who was assigned to the same mission station. Much of our Conference offering is still being used toward Dr. Scudder's support.

After the resignation of Rev. Philip H. Clifford, Elder Abraham A. Emmons was elected Moderator Pro Tem. Rev. Oliver Fletcher, who had been summer supply during a vacation period of Rev. Clifford, consented to take charge of the services of the Church for a period, November 30 to December 30, 1917, which was extended for another period ending January 20, 1918. In February, 1918, the Consistory extended a call to Rev. Fletcher if he was willing to join the Classis and if the Classis would accept him. This call included his services at Sunday morning and evening worship and Sunday afternoon at the Chapel. In May, 1919, Rev. Oliver Fletcher accepted the call.

About this time a much needed addition was made within the Church Building—a second stairway was constructed between the first floor and the Church Parlor—thus providing two entrances and two exits between the two floors.

Mr. Fletcher started a Bible Study Class at the parsonage which was attended by quite a few of the young people. Miss Josephine Suydam was a member of this class. She desired to enter the Mission Field and afterward attended and graduated from The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. The Gravesend Church contributed toward Miss Suydam's ex-

penses while at Moody. After graduation she was accepted by the Board of Domestic Missions for work among the Winnebago Indians. While stationed at Winnebago, Nebraska, the Gravesend Church was responsible for her salary (collected as part of the Conference Collection) through the Board of Domestic Missions, R. C. A.

About this time there was a marked change in the community. The farms were sold and small houses and two-family houses began to crop up on the lands where vegetables had grown so luxuriantly. By 1925 a large number of Italians began populating this suburban section of Brooklyn. The Consistory planned to secure, if possible, an Italian Missionary worker to canvass the territory about the Church with a view of holding Italian services in the Sunday School Room on Sunday afternoons. This plan produced opposition and it was deemed best not to continue further on this line.

In May, 1926, Rev. Oliver M. Fletcher asked to be released from the pastorate of Gravesend Church to become the Classical Missionary of the South Classis of Long Island. This was granted and he then took an active part in the organization of several new Reformed Churches in suburban Long Island.

A call was then extended to Rev. William R. Torrens, who accepted, and he was installed as Pastor of the Gravesend Reformed Church December, 1926.

A sad happening of this pastorate was the somewhat sudden death of Mr. Edgar Van Sicklen, the Church organist, on April 30, 1927. Mr. Van Sicklen had been organist for forty-seven years. The congregation was saddened but we knew it was glory for Mr. Van Sicklen. Mr. George Trisdorfer, a former piano pupil of Mr. Van Sicklen's and whom he had trained to the organ, then became the organist of the Church.

After twenty-six years, in 1953, Mr. Trisdorfer asked to be released. He had moved from the vicinity and he had found that driving in was getting more and more of a problem.

Mrs. William Paulus of the Woodlawn congregation, who had substituted at the organ from time to time, now became organist of the Gravesend Reformed Church on August 13, 1953.

Another big event in the Church Life occurred in 1930—the 275th Anniversary of the Church—under the direction of Rev. William R. Torrens and Rev. C. B. Nordland, the Director of the Chapel. Rev. Torrens preached the Anniversary Sermon at the Sunday morning service, March 16th. The evening address was given by Rev. W. H. S. Demarest, D.D., President of the Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, N. J.

The events of the celebration were continued on Monday afternoon, March 17th, with greetings from former pastors, Rev. Philip H. Clifford and Rev. Oliver M. Fletcher. The speaker of Monday evening was Rev. Milton J. Hoffman, D.D., Professor of Sacred History, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Between sessions on Monday dinner was served to those attending. One of Brooklyn's well-known caterers was in charge, so our ladies were free to attend all the events of the day. The program of the entire celebration denotes a wonderful treat to those who attended any or all of the sessions.

In 1942 Reverend Torrens had a severe illness which impaired his vitality to the extent that he considered it advisable to resign. Mrs. Torrens and he took up residence for about two years at the Evangelical Home for the Aged in Brooklyn and then went up to Kirkside at Roxbury, New York, when it was ready for occupancy.

This lovely home had been the residence of Mrs. Helen Gould Shepherd. It was later given to the Reformed Church by her brother, Mr. Frank J. Gould, in his sister's memory, to be used as a home for Aged Ministers and Church Workers. Here both Mr. and Mrs. Torrens are happily domiciled. Mr. Torrens served Gravesend from 1926-1943.

Rev. Linden M. Lindsay was called to the Gravesend Reformed Church in the spring of 1944. Both Rev. Lindsay and his wife were graduates of Hope College, our denominational college in Holland, Mich. He served in several pulpits in upper New York State before coming to Gravesend. Rev. Lindsay's numerous vocal solos added greatly to our Worship services. His portrayal of Henry Ward Beecher in the pageant of the Tercentenary of Protestantism in Brooklyn brought him recognition in Protestant Churches throughout the Borough. Rev. Lindsay resigned in 1954 to become minister of the Memorial Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, New York.

In January, 1955, our Church was filled to capacity for the occasion of the installation of our present minister, Rev. Kenneth Howard Kerr. Following the service, a reception was held to enable those present to greet our new pastor and his family. His vision of the need and responsibility of our Church in the neighborhood and his inspirational preaching are combining to reestablish the Gravesend Reformed Church as a potent force in a changing community.

Regular worship services are held on Sunday mornings in the Church and on Sunday evenings at the Chapel. Sabbath School worship services

are held Sunday mornings at the Church and Sunday afternoons at the Chapel.

The Ladies Aid Society meets regularly in the Church parlor. Their untiring efforts result in many evenings of fine food and fellowship. Their work and support have helped greatly to maintain the beauty of the Church building.

The Women's Missionary Society also holds its regular afternoon meetings in the Church. They will celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the organization of this society in November of this year.

The Women's Missionary Auxiliary was organized in 1938. They hold their monthly evening meetings in the Church, thus enabling the young mothers and business women to participate in the missionary activities of our denomination. In addition to their cooperation with the parent group, the members maintain an active interest in the work of both mission boards. A member of the auxiliary is now president of the Classical Missionary Union of South Long Island.

Although many of the members of the Christian Fellowship have moved away from Brooklyn, they are very faithful in attendance at the regular monthly meetings held on the last Saturday of each month at the Chapel. The programs at these meetings are varied; however, each starts with a devotional period, whether the program that follows is a religious or purely a social event. All young adults in the Church family are heartily welcome.

In the fall of 1954 a group of young teen-agers formed the Youth Fellowship, for the purpose of leadership training in the tasks of the Church. The meetings, held twice a month, combine a worship hour with programs of service and social activity.

There is work for all in these activities of service. We are all working together for the glory of Christ and our Heavenly Father.

During the past fifty years the following men have served as—

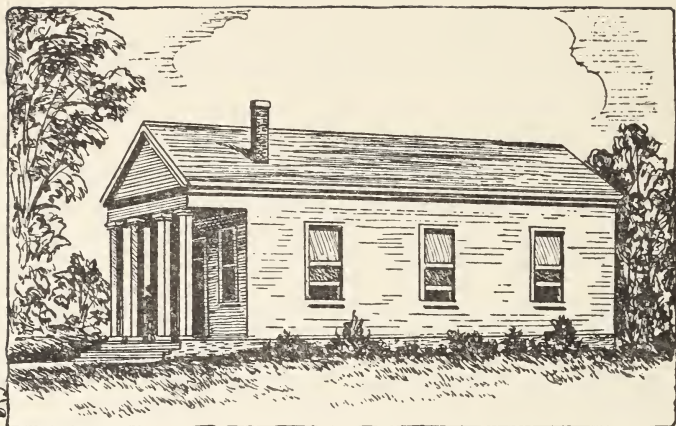
SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE GRAVESEND VILLAGE SUNDAY SCHOOL

ABRAHAM EMMONS

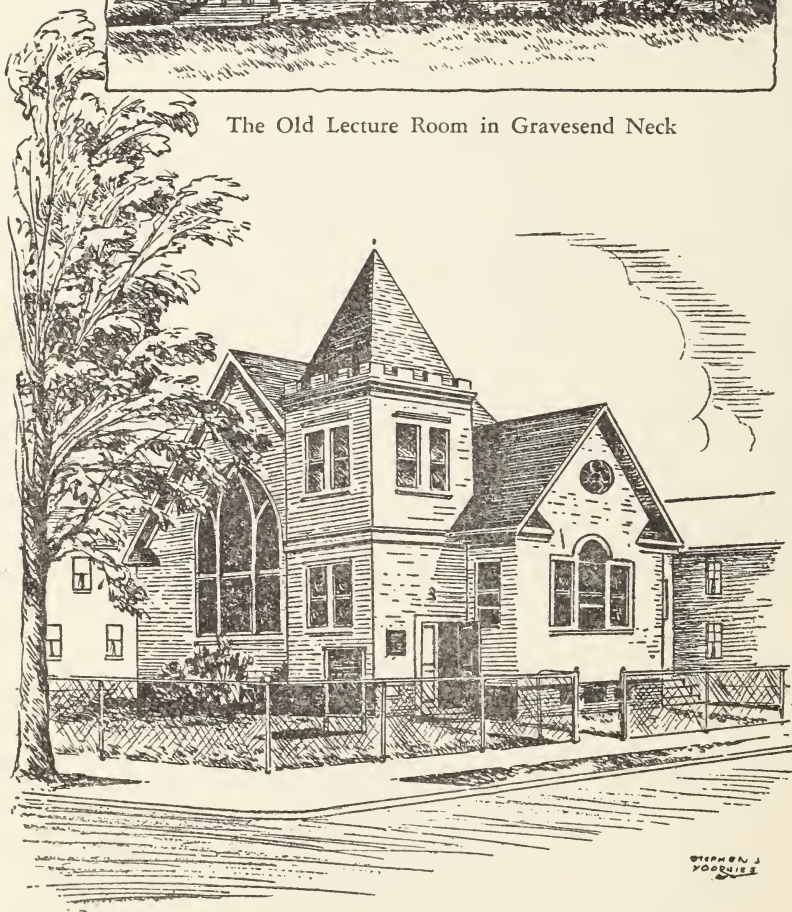
HARRY BENNETT

GEORGE KAPPELMANN

WILLIAM ZUNDEL



The Old Lecture Room in Gravesend Neck



The Present Chapel, Avenue T and East 21st Street

The Gravesend Neck Sabbath School—

Although Sunday School services had been held intermittently in the Gravesend Neck section of the parish, the school was reorganized in 1840 and has continued uninterruptedly to the present time. Originally the Sabbath School met in the little red school house on Gravesend Neck Road near what is now Bedford Avenue. In 1868 a Lecture Room was built in the eastern section of the Town of Gravesend, which was known as Gravesend Neck. This building had been erected for Sabbath School sessions on Sunday afternoons, the weekly prayer-meeting and the monthly preaching service, as well as a gathering place for general sociability.

The land on which it stood, fifty feet by one hundred and twenty-five feet, had been donated by one of the Church members, Mr. Simon C. Garretsen, owner of the grain mill situated on Garretsen's Mill Pond. The building, twenty-five feet by thirty feet, had been constructed by another member of the congregation, Mr. James Stephen Voorhies, at a cost of \$1,820.00.

The Coney Island Jockey Club had purchased most of the surrounding land south, east and west of the Sabbath School through the years and now were desirous of purchasing the building for a school for the jockeys and stable boys who were not free to attend the public schools of the neighborhood when these were in session. The Jockey Club offered to purchase ground and building for \$6,500.00. The Consistory of the Church accepted the offer and then purchased the property at Avenue T and East 21st Street, on which the present Chapel was erected. Members of the Church and Chapel contributed to its furnishings. The building was dedicated Sunday, January 13, 1907.

In 1925 a change was made in connection with Church services at the Chapel in Gravesend Neck section. Whereas it had been customary for the minister to hold services thereat the third Sunday afternoon of each month, it was then decided to have services each Sunday evening to

meet the needs of the increasing number of people in the neighborhood. These evening services commenced in March.

At first the evening preachers were ministerial students from the Biblical Seminary in New York City. They were very fine young men and made many lasting friendships with the people of our Church. We will call to memory Victor Walter, who came there March, 1925, staying until June, 1926. After graduation that year, his wife and he went to Northern Nigeria as missionaries. Gerrit Heemstra was with the group from September, 1926, to June, 1928. He completed his studies that June and after being examined by South Classis he was ordained at the Chapel. This was an impressive event. He then went to the Holy Land under the Biblical Research Foundation, and after further study at the University of Edinburgh he accepted a call to the Pompton Reformed Church of Pompton Lakes, New Jersey.

Then Rev. C. B. Nordland, Secretary of the National Bible Institute, conducted the services from 1926-1930, followed by Rev. Wallace Deyo and by Rev. Clarence Shute, Dean of National Bible Institute. Then came our dear friend of many occasions at both Church and Chapel, Rev. Sanford C. Hearn. This period ended about 1944, at which time the minister at Gravesend became responsible for conducting these services. Mr. C. Arthur Larsson had charge of the musical program at the Chapel.

In 1940 the 100th Anniversary of the Chapel Sunday School was celebrated. The Chapel Christian Fellowship produced a historical pageant. The first episode showed a committee from the towns in Kings County waiting upon Peter Stuyvesant with a request that a church be established on Long Island. The second episode took place in the home of Mr. William Bennett, where a group was gathered to raise funds for the building of the Lecture Room.

In conjunction with this pageant an exhibit was arranged which included many photographs and documents important to the history of the Sabbath School.

One of the young men of the Chapel, Howard West, felt the call to the gospel ministry, and entered the Missionary Training Institute, Nyack, New York. Since the completion of his course he has been serving the Methodist Church at Grahamsville, New York.

During the late afternoon hours of March 7, 1950, a mysterious fire broke out within the Chapel. Fortunately, it was soon observed by one of the neighbors, which prevented its destruction, although serious damage was done to the interior and furnishings. Sunday School services were resumed in the basement in April and evening worship in September.

There have been many members of the Chapel who have been called to our Master's work in the mission service in Foreign and Domestic Fields.

Miss Helen Brown, now Mrs. James Carder, after receiving her religious training, has spent her entire life, first as a missionary in Venezuela, South America, and later being transferred to the Canary Islands, where she is still engaged in missionary service.

Miss Henrietta Winter (Mrs. Cornelius Stam) studied at Moody Bible Institute with the expectation of entering service on the foreign field. Unable to pass the physical examination, she applied and was accepted on the staff of the Star of Hope Mission in Paterson, New Jersey. The Gravesend Church contributed toward some of her expenses while studying.

Miss Clara Walther also received religious training at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. At the completion of her courses she returned to New York and worked for many years for the Brooklyn Federation of Churches and later with the Prison League of New York.

Miss Florence Day, now Mrs. Robert Bicknell, trained for the mission field at the Albany Bible Institute. She, with her husband are now serving at the Marine Medical Mission at Thetis Island, British Columbia, Canada.

Those who have been close to the work at the Chapel are justly proud of these and others who go forth to spread the Gospel in His name.

SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE GRAVESEND NECK SABBATH SCHOOL

JOHN S. VOORHIES

PETER DUMONT VOORHIES 1840-1865

JACQUES VAN BRUNDT VORIS

JACOBUS S. VOORHIES 1866-1875

A. H. BATTERSBY 1875-1878

JACOBUS S. VOORHIES 1878-1898

EDWARD BENNETT 1899-1933

S. ROBIN VORIS 1933-1939

JOHN C. CULLUM 1939-1950

JAMES MURRAY 1950-

1655

1955

THE 300th ANNIVERSARY
of the
Gravesend Reformed Church

Gravesend Neck Road and East First St.,
Brooklyn, New York.

•

Minister

Rev. K. HOWARD KERR

Elders

JOHN C. CULLUM
ALFRED H. RYDER
JAMES MURRAY
WILLIAM ZUNDEL

Deacons

DONALD RICHARDS
AUGUST SCHNEPF
MATTHEW TUIITE
GEORGE WALKER

Organist

Mrs. WILLIAM PAULUS

Treasurer

JOHN C. CULLUM

Missionary in Service

Dr. LEWIS SCUDDER

Arabia

